
From: Glenn Claflin <gclaflin@drcfc.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 20, 2013 1:21 PM
To: AppropriationTestimony
Subject: Restore Funding to Center's for Independent Living
Attachments: DRCFC General Brochure.pdf; Restore CIL Funding.pdf

Dear Senators and Representatives of the Appropriations Committee:

The elimination of funding for Connecticut's five independent living Centers poses a grave threat to the lives of many people with disabilities in our state. As a person with a disability and a staff member at a Center, I know that Centers for independent living provide vital services to people with disabilities and communities at large. Because of our work, people who were in danger of institutionalization, now live dignified and valued lives in the community. Others who were not working and were on disability benefits are now getting the supports they need to become productive workers. Finally, communities and service providers have access to specialized information on disability related services. Our services save the state money by preventing institutionalization, fostering independence and creating employment opportunities.

As an independent living advocate, I provide information and referral, peer support, advocacy, and independent living skills training services to approximately 100 persons with disabilities each year. I also answer hundreds of information and referral calls on programs and services to the community at large. On a daily basis, I receive calls from people with disabilities and their families who are in crises. Some are losing their homes to foreclosure; others are being threatened with eviction or lacking services to continue to live independently in their homes.

The services we provide save the state money by decreasing homelessness and institutionalization, and increasing employment. Individuals with severe health conditions who are unable to work often live on poverty level disability benefits. They are one-step away from foreclosure, eviction or institutionalization in a nursing home. Our services help them remain in the community and become productive citizens.

Over 90% of our staff are persons with disabilities. Several of my colleagues are former consumers of mine. They came to us for services and were surprised to be treated as equals and peers. Peer support services, provided by persons with disabilities, enabled them to see their value as individuals and workers and realize that their disability need not be a barrier to employment. These individuals with high-level skills faced huge barriers to maintaining employment.

Each of the five Centers for Independent living in Connecticut provides health insurance counseling through CHOICES certified counselors. Each provides services to the elderly as Aging and Disability Resource Centers or Networks. Each assists individuals transition out of expensive nursing homes into the community through Connecticut's Money Follows the Person (MFP) program, and each provide employment and pre-employment services through Social Security's Ticket to Work program.

In short, state dollars allocated to centers for independent living are returned many times when people with disabilities enter the workforce, leave nursing homes for the community, and leave shelters for permanent housing. We SAVE the state money. Our services are a bargain. It makes sense to restore our funding.

To help you better understand the work we do, I am attaching a brief summary of the work done by the Disability Resource Center along with how eliminating funding will affect all five independent living centers. I appreciate your attention to our concerns.

Sincerely,

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